



20/20

The Indiana Conservation Partnership's
Vision for the Future



"We must encourage and support conservation so Indiana's natural treasures can be enjoyed for years to come. I applaud ICP for taking a team approach to leverage resources and get conservation on the land."

Lt. Governor Becky Skillman



Indiana Conservation Partnership



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Dear Friend of Conservation,

We are excited to present to you, **20/20: The Indiana Conservation Partnership's Vision for the Future**. Soil and Water Conservation has risen to the federal and state forefront. With the establishment of the Indiana State Department of Agriculture (ISDA) along side the greening of Farm Bill initiatives, the Indiana Conservation Partnership (ICP) recognizes that the timing is right to position ourselves with a new cooperative plan of action.

We brought representatives from each of our organizations together to build on our successes, create strategies and develop a plan to carry us into the future. This process builds on the groundwork laid by T by 2000 and previous ICP business plans. This group agreed that we must utilize and leverage our time and resources to create and take advantage of future opportunities. We call this new partnership commitment the Cooperative Conservation Initiative (CCI).

Additionally, we recognized that we were in the process of restructuring our own individual organizations. In the spirit of the CCI, we took advantage of this opportunity to coordinate our efforts and take our partnership to a new level. This coordination resulted in the creation of the Conservation Implementation Teams (CIT), a stream-lined technical assistance delivery model in which federal, state and local employees work side-by-side to get conservation on the land. Through CIT, we will combine our workloads, eliminate duplication of effort, and strengthen our impact.

This plan lays out six strategies to realize our vision: Delivery System, Accountability, Leadership Development, Technology, Outreach, and Funding. The ICP is dedicated to working as one entity to implement these strategies through the CCI.

Gene Weaver
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History of Soil Conservation and the Indiana Conservation Partnership (ICP)

While the ICP wasn't formalized until the 1980s, the need for this alliance was stirring as early as the 1930s. The following is a brief history of the evolution that led to, established, and has driven the ICP.

Mid 1930s

Fierce windstorms from the Great Plains carried huge dark clouds of dust eastward and blackened skies as far away as the nation's capital.

- Congress established the Soil Erosion Service in 1933, which later became the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) in the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to conserve natural resources and improve productivity on agricultural lands. This agency was later re-named the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).
- Because of the mistrust of "government" people, the concept of Soil Conservation Districts was developed. This meant soil conservation was to be led by local people, generally on a county level and that conservationists from USDA and state level Cooperative Extension Services and Departments of Natural Resources would be available to help Districts with technical assistance.

1940s-1970s

A conservation movement swept the nation. Conservation agencies saw an increase in demand and concerns, and since the technology of soils and soil conservation was the same on all lands, branched out into urban issues.

- The Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act was enacted to help communities in flood prevention and erosion control on a watershed basis.
- The Resource Conservation and Development Program was created to advance community development and environmental protection in multi-county areas.
- SCS provides soil surveys and interpretations to assist states, local governments, and other private agencies in community and resource planning.
- When global grain and oilseed prices spiked, then-Secretary of Agriculture Earl Butz unleashed farmers from decades of production controls and urged them to plant "fence row to fence row" to feed the world.

1980s

USDA began erosion inventories in the late 1800s, which showed an increase in erosion with every completed inventory until 1987. Moving to tractors from horses and mules, less land was needed for pasture and hay and our increasing population was asking for more corn, cotton, soybeans, and vegetable crops. By the 1987 inventory, with no-till planting being rapidly adopted, erosion rates were decreasing for the first time in the century.

- The 1985 Farm Bill required landowners to carry out their conservation plans to receive USDA conservation program benefits.
- In Indiana, Governor Bob Orr, created the Governor's Soil Resource Study Commission. T by 2000, the final report of the Soil Resources Study Commission, made recommendations to strengthen the State's role in conservation, to be administered by the Division of Soil Conservation, under the guidelines of the State Soil Conservation Board (SSCB), and carried out locally by Districts. Out of T by 2000 came:

- ⇒ 5 Regional Soil Conservation Education Specialists, 60-75 Erosion Control Technicians, and 5 Regional Urban Conservation Specialists.
- ⇒ A state funded cost-share program (funded from 1996-1998). \$4 million dollars allocated in 459 projects in 83 counties to build grassed waterways, Water and Sediment Control Basins, erosion control structures, terraces and diversions with an average 10 year lifespan.
- ⇒ The Lake and River Enhancement Program (LARE).

1990s

The 1996 Farm Bill created programs to enhance wildlife, improve wetlands, and address specific resource concerns on farms. The Farm Bill started directing how federal dollars would be spent. The ICP continued to progress, but budgets began to tighten, and increased workload (Rule 5, Coastal Zone Management Plan, Conservation Education, urban issues, etc.) began to take a toll on workload and financial resources.

- Cooperative Agreements were entered into between NRCS, the State and Districts.
- The ICP Strategic Plan was developed in 1997.

2000-2005

T by 2000 ended with the arrival of 2000 and along with Farm Bill programs and local initiatives had made significant progress in erosion control. The 2002 Farm Bill provided more financial assistance, but less technical assistance. The ICP focused on addressing local needs, such as strengthening district leadership and providing updated computer tools. All the Partners began pulling independently to address financial and workload challenges.

- Clean Water Indiana funding passed, providing state match for local initiatives. For every dollar invested by the State the Clean Water Indiana Program generated \$2.45 to support local projects.
- Extension and NRCS reorganized in Indiana. NRCS created technical service teams.
- Indiana State Department of Agriculture was created, including the Division of Soil Conservation (DSC) previously in the Department of Natural Resources.



Today

The ICP is revitalized and focused on cooperative conservation. The Partnership is ready to deliver services and assistance through cutting edge technology. They want to maintain and enhance the leadership needed and improve communication and outreach both internally and externally. The Partnership recognizes the challenge for continued funding and is ready to be held accountable for their accomplishments.

- NRCS and ISDA reorganize, creating cooperative technical service teams, called Conservation Implementation Teams (CIT).
- The ICP creates an updated strategic plan.

USDA Farm Bill

A Glimpse of Indiana's Current Soil & Water Status

More than one-half of Indiana's landscape is used to grow annual crops. The use of conservation tillage on this cropland is vital to maintaining the long-term productivity of the soil, as well as improving surface water quality. Farmers benefit from conservation tillage through reduced production costs and therefore have the potential for increased profit margins. Both farm and non-farm residents benefit from conservation tillage through cleaner surface water for drinking, recreation, and other uses. Wildlife also benefit from the reduced runoff, cleaner water, and the habitat provided, particularly in no-till fields.

Soil Loss

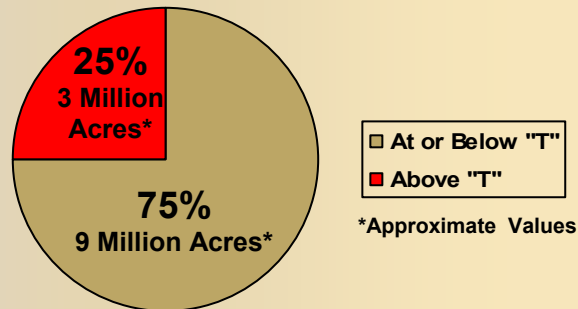


Chart 1

Indiana's Conservation Tillage Trends 2004

No-Till Trends

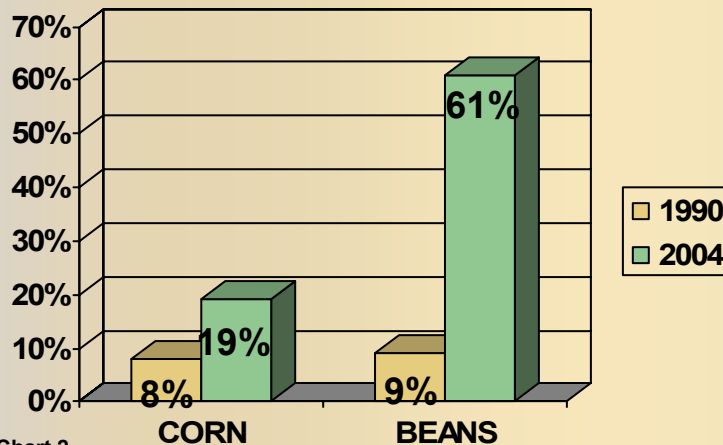
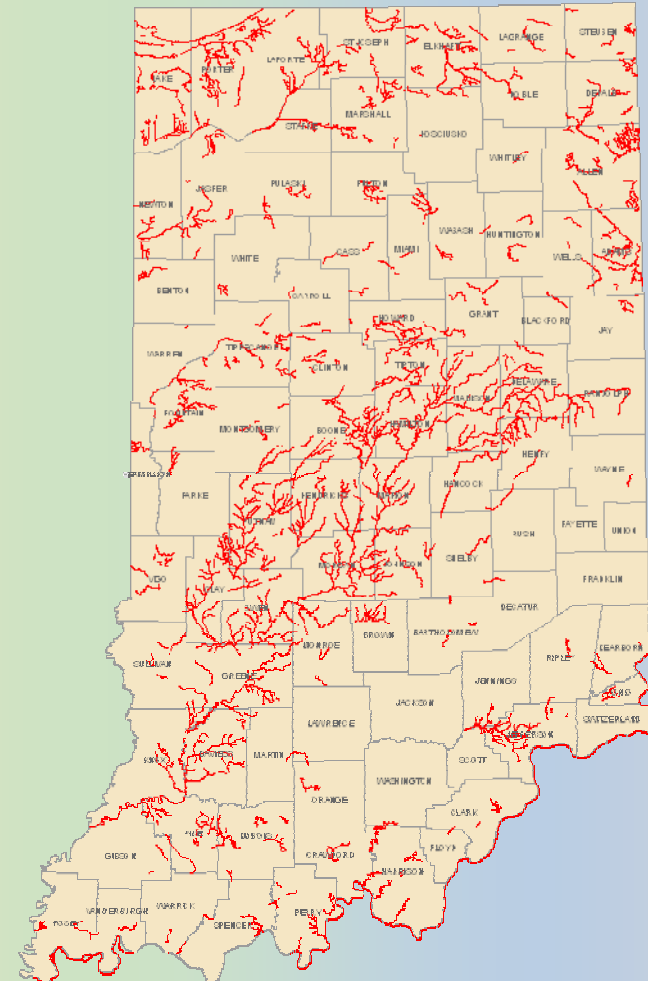


Chart 2

Indiana's Conservation Tillage Trends 2004

Since 1990, the overwhelming adoption of no-till and other conservation tillage systems has resulted in the accomplishment of **75 percent** of Indiana's soil at or below "T" (the tolerable level of soil loss in which new soil can replace the soil lost). While soil conservation has come a long way in Indiana, there continues to be more than **3 million acres** losing soil at a rate faster than "T" and in need of conservation practices.

2004 Impaired Waterbodies Non-point Source Pollution



IDEM 303d Impaired Waterbodies Data 2004

While soil conservation efforts have made a dent in water quality concerns, several Indiana cities, including Ft. Wayne and Indianapolis, spend significant funds to treat river water to render it drinkable. Many Indiana lakes and streams are still clogged with algae, weeds, and sediment from erosion or excess nutrients. Indiana's poor water quality also limits the consumption of the fish harvested from our own rivers, streams, lakes, ponds, and reservoirs.

A Comparison of Indiana's Current Funding Status

Direct State Appropriations to Districts (Excluding Cost-Share)

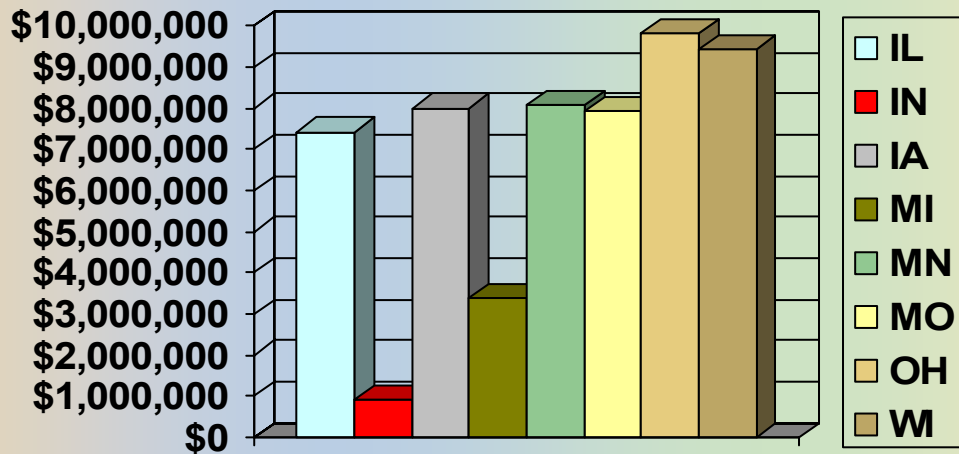


Chart 4

NACD 2004

Indiana lags behind **ALL** North Central Region states in the amount of money the State directly appropriates to Districts.

In 2004, Indiana only distributed **\$920,000** to our Districts. This amount pales in comparison to our counterparts' average state appropriation of **\$7.1 million**. Ohio leads with **\$9.8 million** allocated directly to Districts.

State Funds Invested in Soil Conservation Cost-Share

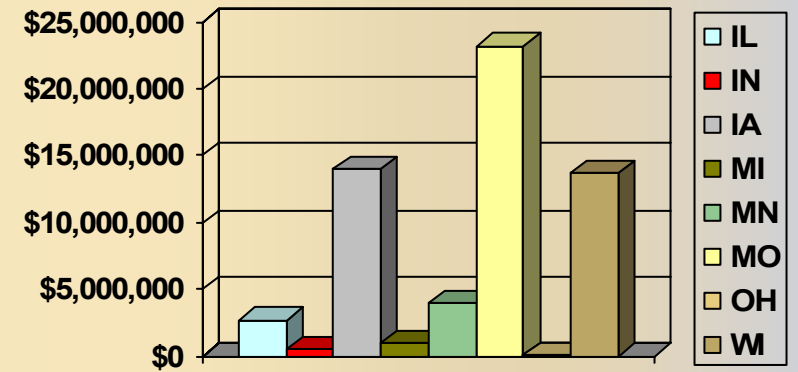


Chart 5

NACD 2004

In 2004, Indiana designated **\$562,389** in Lake And River Enhancement (LARE) funds to Soil Conservation Practice Cost-Share Programs. The average cost-share investment among our counterparts was **\$8.4 million**. Missouri leads with **\$23.2 million** dedicated to these programs.

County Government Financial Aid to Districts

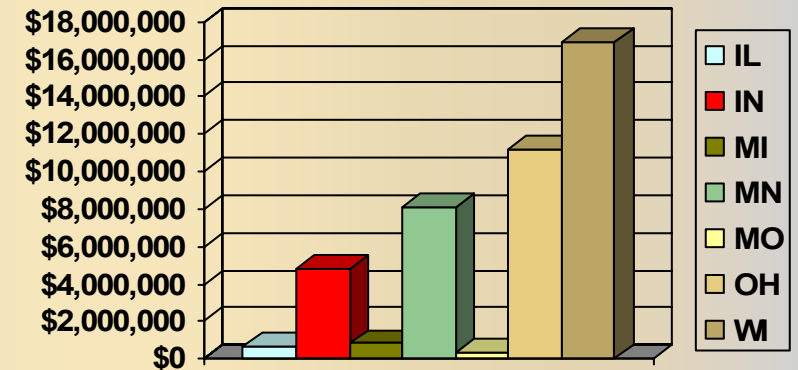


Chart 6

NACD 2004

In 2004, **99 percent** of Indiana's County Governments designated approximately **\$4.8 million** to their Districts. Indiana's percentage of counties supporting Districts is well above the **73 percent** average of others in the North Central Region in the amount of counties that offer assistance to their District Programs. Our level of county financial assistance has increased significantly over past 20 years; however, it is still well below the average support of **\$6.3 million** that our counterparts provide. Wisconsin leads with their local governments investing **\$16.9 million** in Districts.

Indiana Conservation Partnership's Solution

Mission

To provide technical, financial, and educational assistance needed to implement economically and environmentally compatible land and water stewardship decisions, practices, and technologies.

Vision

The ICP's land and water stewardship assistance will improve the quality of Indiana's streams, rivers, and lakes; protect our drinking water; and increase soil quality to boost food and fiber production.

Desired Outcomes

- Clean Drinking Water
- Cleaner Streams, Rivers & Lakes for Recreation
- Productive Soils for Indiana's Farmers
- Enhanced Quality of Life for Indiana Citizens
- Stronger State Economy
- Funded Local District Programs
- Funded Local Cost-Share Programs

The Strategies

FUNDING

Establish a dedicated source of state **funding** with potential for growth based on need, accountability, and performance.

DELIVERY SYSTEM

Establish an effective, locally led **conservation delivery system** that addresses local resource needs through financial, technical, and educational assistance.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Utilize an integrated ICP **accountability system** that tracks resource driven results.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Elevate the significance of conservation in Indiana to attract and retain **strong leadership**.

TECHNOLOGY

Utilize the **latest technology** available to deliver and measure conservation.

OUTREACH

Provide a **consistent and positive message** describing the economic, environmental, and quality of life benefits of conservation.

Healthy Soil. Clean Water. Helping People Care for the Land.

Funding

*Establish a dedicated source of state **funding** with potential for growth based on need, accountability, and performance.*

Why This Strategy?

The ICP recognizes any efforts to advance in all areas of the ICP Strategic Plan require additional state funds and resources. In order for this plan to be successful, ICP must prepare its members to develop and utilize funding opportunities on the federal, state, and local levels.

As a result of the ICP Funding Strategy, ICP will acquire dedicated state funds to fulfill all needs identified in the ICP Strategic Plan.

Next Steps:

- DSC Leadership will present a proposal requesting that the SSCB spearhead the Funding Strategy. DSC will recommend that SSCB hire or contract a Funding Analyst position dedicated to the research and implementation of the Funding Strategy.
- The Funding Analyst will evaluate viable funding sources.
- The Funding Analyst will develop a legislative funding plan.
- The Funding Analyst will work with the Outreach Workgroup to create a legislative communications plan for selected funding options.
- ICP will gain the support to establish the state funding necessary to implement the ICP Strategic Plan.

Delivery System

*Establish an effective, locally-led **conservation delivery system** that addresses local resource needs through financial, technical, and educational assistance.*

Why This Strategy?

The ICP recognizes the need for an effective and efficient stream-lined delivery system. We call this concept the Cooperative Conservation Initiative (CCI). We must utilize and leverage our local, state and federal resources to their full potential. In the past, partners have operated independently creating barriers to opportunity. ICP believes that by utilizing the CCI, our collective strength will accelerate our delivery impact.

As a result of the ICP Delivery System Strategy, the CCI will transform the ICP into the recognized local source for technical assistance, financial, and educational to address soil, water, and related natural resource issues.

Accomplishments:

- ICP Leaders rolled out the concept of the CCI in September 2005 at four regional ICP Leadership Forums.
- NRCS and DSC rolled out their new technical delivery system, Conservation Implementation Teams (CIT), in conjunction with the September 2005 roll out of the CCI.
- ICP Leaders established a Delivery System Workgroup in October 2005 to develop the statewide roles of all of the ICP members and develop recommendations to update the ICP Cooperative Working Agreements.

Next Steps:

- NRCS and DSC will fully utilize the CIT structure. NRCS and DSC will cooperatively deliver local technical assistance through eight implementation teams.
- ICP Leadership will adopt statewide roles of all of the ICP members, developed by the Delivery System Workgroup, and update ICP Cooperative Working Agreements.
- ICP Leadership representatives will work with Districts to update Local ICP Cooperative Working Agreement Addendums to define District specific individualized partner contributions to the partnership.
- The Delivery System Workgroup will develop a Funding Delivery Plan including:
 - ◇ State-supported base-level operating funds for Districts.
 - ◇ Local funding sources for Districts.
 - ◇ State grant funds to enhance District capacity.
 - ◇ State Cost-Share/Stewardship Incentive Program.
 - ◇ State Matching Fund to leverage federal dollars.

Accountability

*Utilize an integrated **accountability system** that tracks resource driven results.*

Why This Strategy?

The ICP's strength lies within our ability to get conservation on the land. As our opportunity to make an impact increases through the CCI, we must prepare to record our needs and successes in a measurable, consistent, and integrated manner. We can no longer afford to overlook this vital data.

As a result of the ICP Accountability Strategy, Indiana will utilize an integrated accountability system in which the ICP will demonstrate the measurable impact the CCI will make through conservation successes based on science and resource driven needs.

Accomplishments:

- ICP conducted two District Visits with SWCDs as of September 2005.
- ICP Leaders established an Accountability Workgroup in October 2005 to develop guidelines for a statewide inventory and assessment.

Next Steps:

- ICP will utilize a locally integrated accountability reporting system to track resource driven results.
- ICP Leadership will emphasize and conduct technical and program quality assurance based on the NRCS Field Office Technical Guide.
- DSC and SWCDs will enhance the partnership operational review process by expanding the District Visits program.
- All 92 SWCDs will have a needs based Business Plan that incorporates geo-referenced resource data. SWCDs will utilize their Business Plans for incentive and leverage funding requests.

Leadership Development

*Elevate the **significance of conservation in Indiana** to attract and retain **strong leadership**.*

Why This Strategy?

The ICP understands the essential need for strong leadership for Indiana's soil and water conservation programs. All partners, from the local to federal levels, must attract and retain strong local leaders to guide the ICP forward in our conservation efforts. The ICP will provide the guidance, training, and opportunity necessary to develop this crucial asset.

As a result of the ICP Leadership Development Strategy, Indiana will attract and retain an empowered leadership that advocates innovative conservation initiatives on the local, state, and federal levels.

Accomplishments:

- ICP Leaders established a Leadership Development Workgroup in October 2005 to launch a SWCD Leadership Institute.

Next Steps:

- DSC will increase SWCD support and double the number of District Support Specialist positions from four to eight.
- The State Soil Conservation Board (SSCB) will develop a campaign to empower supervisors to exercise their full authority at the local level, and to help supervisors and ICP staff understand the full role of supervisors.
- The SSCB will develop recommended SWCD policies, providing tools to local leaders and aiding in consistency of policy across the state.
- ICP members will participate at the local level in the newly formed ISDA County Strategic Teams.
- SSCB will make recommendations for District law legislative actions, expanding opportunities for local leadership.
- The Leadership Development Workgroup will establish a SWCD Leadership Institute to address supervisor leadership & professional development training.
- IASWCD will maintain and strengthen the District Visits Program while exploring additional funding to support the program.
- ICP will provide incentives for training SWCD supervisors and staff, DSC staff.

Technology

*Utilize the **latest technology** available to deliver and measure conservation.*

Why This Strategy?

The ICP recognizes the value of technology in our conservation efforts. The utilization of the latest technology results in the enhancement of communications, technical assistance, assessments, and accountability measures. The ICP must elevate our knowledge, adoption, and skill levels of current technology to best manage our resources.

As a result of the ICP Technology Strategy, the ICP will lead the nation in the adoption of innovative and appropriate technology, efficiently delivering quality conservation of Indiana's soil and water resources.

Accomplishments:

- ICP Leaders established a Technology Advisory Workgroup in October 2005 to implement a technology advancement plan.

Next Steps:

- The Technology Advisory Workgroup will develop a common web-based clearinghouse for all ICP communication needs.
- The Technology Advisory Workgroup will complete a full assessment of ICP technological resources including a County Resource Inventory. They will inventory available equipment, identify technology constraints, and tailor ICP technology to staff and partner's needs.
- The Technology Advisory Workgroup will create a Technology Advancement Plan to ensure that ICP remains on the cutting edge of technology related to the management and conservation of Indiana's natural resources.

Outreach

*Provide a **consistent & positive message** describing the economic, environmental, and quality of life benefits of conservation.*

Why This Strategy?

The ICP needs to communicate our CCI success stories. By working together, the ICP can strengthen our voice, reaching larger audiences with increased impact. Getting the word out about our successes will attract the human and financial capital needed to implement the strategic plan. In addition, the ICP needs to ensure that our common customers are aware of all ICP services, including traditionally underserved audiences. Our responsibilities as conservation professionals require the ICP to inform and educate the citizens of Indiana, in addition to partnership members.

As a result of the ICP Outreach Strategy, the citizenry of Indiana will understand the economic, environmental, and quality of life benefits of soil and water conservation.

Accomplishments:

- ICP Leaders established an Outreach Workgroup in October 2005 to address the outreach, marketing, and educational needs of the ICP.

Next Steps:

- The Outreach Workgroup will develop an outreach plan to address ICP communications needs and maximize efforts.
- The Outreach Workgroup will develop a Speakers Bureau of 25 informed speakers to promote new technology and state initiatives to the conservation community.
- The Outreach Workgroup will develop legislative tools and policy impact documents to keep legislators informed of ICP accomplishments, needs, and past utilization.
- The Outreach Workgroup will develop procedures/methods for internal partnership communications to efficiently distribute information to all partnership staff.

Data Sources

Chart 1: Soil Loss

Indiana's Conservation Tillage Trends: 1990-2004,
ISDA-Division of Soil Conservation
<http://www.in.gov/isda/soil/pdf/Poster.pdf>

Chart 2: No-Till Trends

Indiana's Conservation Tillage Trends: 1990-2004
ISDA-Division of Soil Conservation
<http://www.in.gov/isda/soil/pdf/Poster.pdf>

Map 3: 2004 Impaired Waterbodies: Non-point source Pollution

IDEM 303d Impaired Waterbodies Data
Indiana Integrated Water Quality Monitoring & Assessment Report
Indiana Department of Environmental Management
<http://www.in.gov/idem/water/planbr/wqs/quality/2004integrept/inarrt2004.doc>

Chart 4: Direct State Appropriations to Districts

Comparative Information on the District Program in the North Central Region 2004
National Association of Conservation Districts
<http://www.northcentral.nacdnet.org/Documents/NCR%20Survey%20Results.pdf>

Chart 5: State Funds Invested in Soil Conservation Cost-share

Comparative Information on the District Program in the North Central Region 2004
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<http://www.northcentral.nacdnet.org/Documents/NCR%20Survey%20Results.pdf>

Chart 6: County Government Financial Aid to Districts

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<http://www.northcentral.nacdnet.org/Documents/NCR%20Survey%20Results.pdf>

This document is a working document and subject to change as the ICP Strategic Workgroups research and develop their action plans.



Indiana Conservation Partnership (ICP)

The members of the Indiana Conservation Partnership are the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, ISDA-Division of Soil Conservation and State Soil Conservation Board, Purdue Cooperative Extension Service, and the Indiana Association Soil and Water Conservation Districts. The members are interdependent in that they have separate responsibilities yet are dependent on each other for successfully filling the vision and mission of the Partnership. As a partnership we are committed to providing our customers with quality service through effective communication, professional integrity and mutual respect.



USDA– Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

The Natural Resources Conservation Service provides leadership in a partnership effort to help people conserve, maintain, and improve our natural resources and environment.



ISDA-Division of Soil Conservation (DSC)

The Division of Soil Conservation facilitates the protection, wise use, and enhancement of Indiana's soil and water resources by coordinating implementation of the State's soil conservation and water quality protection programs, and providing assistance to local Soil and Water Conservation Districts.

State Soil Conservation Board (SSCB)

The SSCB provides guidance and coordination to the state's 92 Soil and Water Conservation Districts as they provide local leadership in the protection of Indiana's soil and water resources. Additionally, the SSCB administers the Clean Water Indiana Fund, a water quality related erosion and sediment reduction program.



Purdue Cooperative Extension Service (CES)

Purdue University's Agriculture and Natural Resources Team is the premiere source of educational programs and information about Agriculture, Natural Resources, and the Food System. We are a customer driven educational organization which assists Indiana citizens in achieving their goals of profit in agriculture, abundant and safe food, a clean environment and effective stewardship of natural resources.



Indiana Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts (IASWCD)

The Indiana Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts represents SWCDs as one voice, and assists the leadership of local Districts through coordination and education for the wise use and management of our natural resources.

December 2005



The members of the Indiana Conservation Partnership are the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, ISDA-Division of Soil Conservation and State Soil Conservation Board, Purdue Cooperative Extension Service, and the Indiana Association Soil and Water Conservation Districts. The members are interdependent in that they have separate responsibilities yet are dependent on each other for successfully filling the vision and mission of the Partnership. As a partnership we are committed to providing our customers with quality service through effective communication, professional integrity and mutual respect.